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Acquisition Related Questions

1. **Q:** Do you have a date selected for the industry day?

    A: October 23rd, 2015. Registration is required. This Industry Day is not specific to the requirements identified within the RFI posted.

2. **Q:** What does 2000 contractor resources entails, (i.e., human, equipment's and other materials)?

    A: It means 2,000 contractor personnel.

3. **Q:** Who is the incumbent contractor?

    A: Accenture Federal Services, Computer Sciences Corp, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman.

4. **Q:** Is the work currently being performed within the SBA Set-Aside program? Or is it Full and Open?

    A: The current contracts were awarded in 2010 as a result of full and open competition, no set-asides. The agency anticipates issuing the continuation of this requirement as referenced with the RFI using full and open competition.

5. **Q:** What is the current size of this effort? Total Level of effort, is it 2000 FTE?

    A: The current "size" of this effort in terms of possible contractor personnel is roughly 2,000 FTEs. However, this is subject to change based upon the requirements and the needs of the agency.

6. **Q:** When does the current period of performance end?

    A: The current contracts have an option to extend the term of the contract through 09/28/2017, if exercised. In addition, the contracts include FAR clause 52.217-8, Option to Extend Services.

7. **Q:** Is the work to be done at Contractor Site or Government site? If both site, what percentage will be contractor site and what percentage will be Government site?

A: Combination but mostly contractor-site.

8. **Q:** Can this work be done by adding it to an existing Federal Government non Social Security Agency GWAC?"

   A: No.

9. **Q:** We request a due diligence session to allow for a better understanding of the current SSA environment prior to the final RFP.

   A: At this time, there is no plan to conduct a pre-solicitation, or pre-proposal conference. However, as previously mentioned, the agency, in general, will be holding an IT Industry Day scheduled for October 23, 2015.

10. **Q:** Will there be a question and answer phase regarding this RFI? If so, what is the timeline, FY16 First or second quarter? When should vendors expect the full RFP, FY16, first or second quarter? Will there be an oral presentation?

    A: Addressed via this document. In addition, the acquisition timeline for this requirement is outlined in the pre-solicitation synopsis posted on FedBizOpps.

SOW & Technical Questions/Suggestions

1. **Q:** We respectfully request as SSA develops that next generation of the IT Support Services Contract that, opportunity exists to supplement core IT Services with innovative service delivery models that favor consumption-based delivery in addition to traditional labor hour approach. This approach allows innovation on behalf of industry and provides SSA with partners that are providing secure, high performing, cost effectively solutions. Further, we request that any such services require a FedRAMP authority to operate (ATO) to ensure compliance with FISMA, NIST, and federal information security guidelines.

   A: The agency is not clear on the direction of this comment.

2. **Q:** Since there are so many uncertainties (workloads in each area) will you be providing a general schedule of hours to help contractors make better estimates?

   A: Yes, the agency anticipates providing this information as part of the solicitation package, which is still in development.

3. **Q:** With the RFP, can you please provide some sort of metrics associated with each environment (Mainframe/DB vs. Relational DB for example) to help us make more informed decisions on skills mixes? Is cloud a viable candidate for some environments?

   A: Yes, the agency anticipates providing this information as part of the solicitation package, which is still in development.

4. **Q:** What's the backlog on new development for example, how many people should be dedicated to new development vs maintenance on which platforms?

    A: The agency cannot answer this question at this time.

5. **Q:** Is there a list of priorities for the development team?

    A: The agency cannot answer this question at this time, as this will be defined at the task order level.

6. **Q:** Will you be providing additional insight on the preferred development environments? Requirements management, planning, functional prioritization processes, configuration management? Is development expected on site or at contractor's site?"

    A: The agency cannot answer this question at this time, as this will be defined at the task order level.

7. **Q:** When will SSA disclose the names of software/hardware products?

    A: The agency anticipates providing this information as part of the solicitation package, which is still in development.

8. **Q:** Does SSA anticipate modernizing all their systems or will legacy systems in their environment?

    A: There will be a combination of efforts.

9. **Q:** How many SSA component offices/locations exist?

    A: Over 13 Deputy Commissioner Offices and each has several Associate Commissioner offices.

10. **Q:** What legislative challenges typically occur that impact SSA's ITSSC effort?

    A: Social Security related changes, Supplemental Social Insurance, Disability, and similar requirements.

11. **Q:** What kind of automation tools is SSA currently considering?

    A: The agency anticipates providing this information as part of the solicitation package, which is still in development.

12. **Q:** What state-of-the-art hardware/software technologies are currently being deployed to employees?

    A: The agency cannot answer this question at this time.

13. **Q:** Define/clarify if ITSSC support will be required for locations other than the SSA HQ (i.e., the SSA data centers)?

    A: Yes, there are needs at multiple SSA locations.

14. **Q:** Does the SSA envision greater use of the ITSSC contract beyond the development and validation stages of the software engineering SDLC? Specifically, expanding the geographic scope to cover OTSO's support to the SSA's three current data centers (Baltimore, Urbana, and Durham).

    A: Yes, however, the agency anticipates the majority of support will be related to lifecycle activities.

15. **Q:** Define/clarify if support will be required for operating systems not specified in the RFI such as Linux and IBM?

    A: Yes, these will be addressed further in the solicitation package.

16. **Q:** Define/clarify if support will be required for other technologies (e.g., Big Data, Data Analytics, etc.)?

    A: Yes, these will be addressed further in the solicitation package.

17. **Q:** Mission Assurance / Software Assurance is critical for large enterprise IT efforts. We recommend splitting these types of requirements off to a separate contract to ensure independence and eliminate OCI.

    A: The Contracting Officer anticipates using the policies in Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Part 12, in conjunction with the policies and procedures for solicitation, evaluation and award prescribed in FAR Part 15, Contracting by Negotiation, and the policies and procedures for giving preference to making [multiple awards] of indefinite-delivery, indefinite-quantity (IDIQ) contracts under FAR 16.5.

18. **Q:** Are you going to list Systems for IT support – overview of the infrastructure including any external interface? Any new product/project development we will managed?

    A: Yes, these will be addressed further in the solicitation package.

19. **Q:** Can SSA please describe the relationship between the SSA data center contractors, software vendors, and ITSSC contractors?

    A: The agency has several software BPAs outside of the ITSSC. ITSSC contractors help support the services related to software as well as resources who are located at or supporting SSA's data centers.

20. **Q:** Please specify candidate's qualification in order to provide services.

A: The agency anticipates providing this information as part of the solicitation package, which is still in development.

21. **Q:** Are hardware and software for the 2013 environment procured?

A: The agency does not understand the relevance of requesting information associated with 2013. However, the Government anticipates providing this information as part of the solicitation package, which is still in development.

22. **Q:** Do candidates needs to travel at multiple location?

A: This will be dependent on the task orders requiring travel. Very few require travel.

23. **Q:** Can work be done remotely or is onsite support required for each of the phases?

A: Some task orders require onsite support but most of them can be done remotely following certain agency security requirements.

Suggestions to Consider

1. **Q:** SSA should consider including commercial best practices as a suggested Past Performance criteria for a successful ITSSC vendor.

   A: The agency will consider these suggestions.

2. **Q:** SSA should consider requiring demonstrated commitment to bringing innovation capabilities, innovation labs, and an ability to demonstrate emerging technologies and execute those technologies as a proof of concept.

   A: The agency will consider these suggestions.

3. **Q:** SSA should consider including on-shore delivery center capabilities as a suggested criterion for a successful ITSSC vendor.

   A: The agency will consider these suggestions.

4. **Q:** SSA should consider including a question on contracting options that a successful ITSSC vendor would support. Examples may include time-and-materials, firm-fixed-price, share-in-savings, outcome-based contracts, and contracts that provide for a percentage of the contract award to be set aside for innovation, proofs of concept, or other strategic items.

   A: The agency will consider these suggestions.

5. **Q:** SSA should consider further standardizing the labor categories to be consistent in the qualifications and years of experience. SSA should also consider including an Industry-Leading Expert SME category that provides SSA the access to industry luminaries in a T&M fashion."

   A: The agency will consider these suggestions.

6. **Q:** Based on our current SSA experience, we recognize SSA's continued shift towards more outcome-oriented, performance-based contracts that place the onus on the contracting community to deliver innovation that produces results. We were particularly encouraged to note that Technical Area 7 from the current ITSSC contract does not appear explicitly in any of the four IT Service Areas defined in the RFI, and assume that SSA intends for Emerging Technology Applications to be an integral part of every task. With that overarching commitment to innovation in mind, we offer the following questions regarding the SOW:
   -The Statement of Needs does not address the potential convergence of infrastructure, endpoints, and software that emerging best practices like DevOps foreshadow over the 10-year period of performance of this contract. To what extent has SSA considered ways we could open the ITSSC-2 scope so that awardees can propose efficiencies that include elements we might traditionally consider infrastructure or operations in their TO proposals?
   -Given SSA's interest in outcome-based contracting (like the Agile teams in support of the new DCPS solution), the new ITSSC contract will need to support robust performance management processes. In what ways has SSA considered engaging industry to solicit best practices and contracting mechanisms that have enabled similar agencies to drive continuous improvements into process and performance across enterprise software support contracts while reducing both up-front investments and total cost of ownership?"

   A: The agency will consider these suggestions.

7. **Q:** In addition to the requirements requested in the RFI Section D, we recommend that continued focus be put forth within the areas of; continuous innovation, exceptional quality, institutional knowledge, and technical leadership.

   A: The agency will consider these suggestions.

8. **Q:** We suggest SSA consider the following items to include in the SOW or as part of their evaluation criteria: 1. Companies should have expertise in managing and delivering government benefits. In order to ensure that IT projects for SSA are delivered effectively and successfully, SSA needs a contractor that truly grasps the mission of SSA to deliver social security and disability payments. 2. Companies that maintain all of these critical certifications: CMMI Level 4 for Development, CMMI Level 3 for Services, ISO 20000 for continuous improvement in IT Systems Management. When the prime contractor has all of these certifications, SSA has the confidence they know how to manage software development, support the IT services effectively, and benefit from a continuous improvement culture.

9. **A:** The agency will consider these suggestions.

10. **Q:** The ITSSC contract has served the SSA well. To achieve a number of business objectives and impact the core IT services model, the new ITSSC should offer SSA access to new technology and innovative solutions to face the constrained budgets, increasing workload, and workforce succession ahead in the next decade. The new ITSSC should also offer the opportunity to improve flexibility and access to new ideas and options beyond staff augmentation services provided today. We recommend SSA consider including options for FFP projects and solutions such as cloud computing and as-a-Service models.

    We also understand that SSA has the current capability to explore and pilot new technologies, applications and approaches. We recommend expanding the role of this capability as SSA proceeds under the new ITSSC. In our experience, this testing environment can contribute great dividends by reducing time-to-capability by providing a test bed for new technologies, as well as new development and delivery models in a secure and trusted environment. Additionally, this approach could incorporate a multivendor governance model to balance cooperation, competition, and encourage innovation among the parties—moving SSA closer to a new style of IT through modernization. A reliable host of such strong vendor options at the fingertips of SSA enables IT decision makers to securely set out in new directions with confidence. We look forward to an opportunity to increase our value to a highly-valued client.

    A: The agency will consider these suggestions.

11. **Q:** We recommend that the ITSSC replacement contract move away from the existing "functional area" strategy for task orders and adopt a competitive task order effort where ITSSC awardees compete for the (FFP, T&M, or CP) tasks orders across swim lanes, and/or within swim lanes allowing both initial and ongoing competition to support initial and on-going best value for the SSA.

    A: The agency will consider these suggestions.

12. **Q:** we request/recommend that the SSA make PRIDE documentation available to all bidders during the Draft RFP period, through a virtual reading room, CD, and/or web access with a Non-Disclosure Agreement, if required."

    A: The agency will consider these suggestions.

13. **Q:** We would like to see Agile methodologies used throughout including Scrum, Kanban, SAFe, and DevOps where appropriate. We believe it will help the agency avoid cost overruns and high visibility failures. We also believe it will focus on end-user needs and achieve the best mission value for the agency.

    A: The agency will consider these suggestions.

Small Business Set-Aside Questions

1. **Q:** Would the SSA consider directing a percentage or portion of this contract as a set-aside for Small Businesses, to assist in meeting SSA's small business goals?

   A: The agency is always committed to meeting (or exceeding) its small business goals. The CO will provide for full and open competition by seeking competitive proposals required by FAR Subpart 6.102(b). Per FAR 5.102, the CO will publish the agency's solicitation, along with any amendments, electronically through the government-wide point of entry (GPE) at www.fedbizopps.gov. Publicizing the agency's solicitation at the GPE will increase competition, broaden industry participation in meeting the agency's requirements, and assist small business concerns in collaborating with large businesses to form subcontracting opportunities.

   Furthermore, the agency anticipates including provisions in the solicitation that will advise offerors for purposes of preparing the "Small Business Subcontracting Plan," that no *specific* subcontracting goals will be established for this requirement, and that the agency has no plans to implement mandatory minimum subcontracting plan goals under any resultant contract. However, the CO will consider including our agency-wide subcontracting goals for offerors to consider in support of contributing to the agency meeting those goals. The approved plan(s) will be made part of the resultant contract(s).

   Note: The agency established competitive five-year multiple-award small business set-aside blanket purchase agreements under FAR 8.405-3 during 2014 for similar IT requirements.

2. **Q:** We respectfully request that the acquisition strategy would include a small business set-aside or parallel vehicle for small businesses with a further breakdown of "tracks" for each of the major socio-economic categories such as HUBZone.

   A: See response to Question 1 under this section above.

3. **Q:** Our recommendation is for the Government and contractor work as an integrated team in fulfilling the Government needs. In addition, we look forward to small business set-aside for this large program.

   A: See response to Question 1 under this section above.

4. **Q:** We recommend that as part of the final RFP, the government include setaside bidding opportunities for small business, small disadvantaged business, small 8(a) certified, and other socio-economic qualified small business types with the SSA.

   A: See response to Question 1 under this section above.

5. **Q:** Our primary question is about the acquisition strategy and if the government intends to award prime position to small and disadvantaged companies.

   A: See response to Question 1 under this section above.

6. **Q:** We have a proven track record of managing and executing against large IDIQ contracts across multiple agencies as a SDVOSB, WOSB, & 8(a) contractor while under the size standard of $27.5 million of the NAICS code 541519. Would the SSA be open to creating either a small business track or small business set a-sides on this contract to help meet the agency's small business numbers?

    A: See response to Question 1 under this section above.

7. **Q:** Given the size of the needs defined by the Statement of Work, we are hopeful that SSA's acquisition strategy will provide opportunity for companies of our size to effectively compete to provide quality services and support to the Agency.

    A: See response to Question 1 under this section above.

8. **Q:** Since specific tasks are competed, is there any reason that some portion of this work could not be set aside for small businesses?

    A: See response to Question 1 under this section above.

9. **Q:** Will SSA consider requiring the large businesses provide a small business participation plan that specifically demonstrates the work to be performed and define the overall percentage of work that will be provided be small business?

    A: See response to Question 1 under this section above.

10. **Q:** We would recommend that SSA set minimum requirements based on the agencies small business goals.

    A: See response to Question 1 under this section above.